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ILLINOIS

hidden springs

STATE FOREST

BIG TREE
SELF INTERPRETIVE
TRAIL

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CONSERVATION

Post 1: POISON IVY (*Rhus radicans*) — This plant can cause severe rashes to those allergic to it. Washing with a strong soap, as soon as possible, can lessen the effects. It has three alternating compound leaflets, 6"-14" long. It can grow as a low lying plant, shrub, or tree climbing vine. The white fruit appears in October, and is eaten by some birds.

Post 2: BOTTOMLAND OR FLOODPLAIN — The bottomland or floodplain forest here is very different from the upland forest. This area is abundant with Sycamore, Cottonwood, Silver Maple, and Boxelder. Plants growing here must do well in wet areas and usually have shallow root systems.

Post 3: BIG TREE — This Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), is 76" in DBH (diameter breast high). Circumference is 19.9 feet and 116 feet tall. The tree, if entirely sound, would produce 4,654 board feet and the crown would yield over 4-cord of fuelwood. Estimated age is 300 years. The average woodland acre in Illinois has less than 3,000 board feet per acre.

Post 4: STINGING NETTLES (*Lapartea canadensis*) — The weeds you see all around this post are noxious perennial weeds known as Stinging Nettles. This name is derived from the fact that they have minute, but very stinging hairs on their leaves and stems. Avoid touching these plants.

Post 5: BOXELDER (*Acer negundo*) — This is a tree sometimes regarded as a "weed" tree, as it is very commonly seen growing where little else will. It often attains a 30-55' height, although it can reach 60' in height. It breaks easily in ice storms and should not be planted if an alternate tree can survive. It's uses as a timber tree range from paper pulp to furniture.

Post 6: BLACK WALNUT (*Juglans nigra*) — This is one of the most valuable timber trees in the forest. It can reach a height of 150 feet tall. The nuts are very palatable, but the real value of the tree lies in the use of it's wood. The wood is used for furniture, interior finishing, gunstocks and anywhere a high quality wood is desired.

Post 7: UPLAND FOREST — You are now moving into a typical upland forest. These plant types are typified by trees that survive in

dryer soils and are slower growing. They include Oaks, Hickories, Elms, and others.

Post 8: SHAGBARK HICKORY (*Carya ovata*) — This is an easily distinguished tree, due to its grayish bark that separates into long strips, giving the tree its common name. The nuts of the tree are sweet and quite good. The wood is hard and strong and used as veneer and as a component of plywood because of its strength. The wood is also commonly used in the making of tool handles.

Post 9: SHINGLE OAK (*Quercus imbricaria*) — This is the only oak naturally found in this area that has no lobes on its leaves. The wood is used for rough construction and the making of shingles.

Post 10: WHITE OAK (*Quercus alba*) — This is the state tree of Illinois, as voted by school children in 1972. This tree has developed multiple trunks, due to a previous logging of the original tree. The White Oak is a very valuable timber tree, with its wood being used for interior finishing, cabinets, general construction, and rough construction.

Post 11: NORTHERN RED OAK (*Quercus rubra*) — This is one of the fastest growing oaks. By the same token, it has a much shorter life span than the members of the slower growing White Oak family. The White Oaks can live up to 250 years, where the Red Oaks can rarely be expected to reach 100 years. The wood is used for furniture, interior finishing and rough construction.

Post 12: GREEN ASH (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) — This tree can easily be confused with the White Ash, but can be distinguished by the fact that the leaflets are green on both surfaces. The White Ash has the lower surface of its leaflets a whitish green. The wood of the Green Ash has usage as tool handles, baseball bats, and interior finishing.

Post 13: PERSIMMON (*Diospyros virginiana*) — This is a small to medium sized tree, rarely attaining 50 feet in height. The tree is most widely known for its fruit, which is a small spherical yellow or orange fruit. This fruit is sweet when ripe, but the flesh is very pulpy. The wood has usage, primarily in the making of golf club heads and billiard cues — although

it has limited use in furniture making.

Post 14: MOCKERNUT HICKORY (*Carya tomentosa*) — This is a long-lived member of the hickories with some specimens reaching 250-300 years. As with many other long-lived species, however, it is slow growing. The common name is derived from the fact that it has rather large shells which yield a very small nut inside. It's wood has limited usage as tool handles, fence posts, and fuelwood.

Post 15: SLIPPERY ELM (*Ulmus rubra*) — This is a moderately sized tree that can reach 80 feet in height. It can be confused with American Elm, when young, but it's leaves have a rough, sandpapery texture to the touch. The wood is used in general construction where a heavy, strong wood is required.

Post 16: RED MULBERRY (*Morus rubra*) — This tree is usually seen as a small tree, but it can attain heights up to 50 feet. The wood is utilized in making fence posts and barrels. The fruits are edible and in the past they were fed to hogs and poultry as a food source.

Post 17: SASSAFRAS (*Sassafras albidum*) — The Sassafras is a small tree that rarely exceeds 40 feet in height. It is often seen growing in patches where little else can survive. The wood has few uses, mainly fence posts. The roots can be dug for the making of tea. Years ago, in rural areas, the drinking of Sassafras tea in the spring of the year was a ritual. The tea was regarded as a tonic that thinned the blood. It does contain stimulating properties, to a small extent, but it's efficacy as a cure-all tonic is doubtful.

Post 18: REDBUD (*Cercis canadensis*) — The Redbud's chief importance lies in it's spring flowering beauty. The small purplish flowers are a fairly common sight to most people. It is a small tree that rarely attains a height of more than 30 feet. It is very tolerant of shaded conditions, and as such it is often seen growing under the forest canopy. The wood of this tree has no commercial value.

Post 19: WILD BLACK CHERRY (*Prunus serotina*) — This is a medium to large size tree that can reach 75 to 80 feet in height. It is a very valuable timber tree, and among the most expensive lumber available. The wood is used in

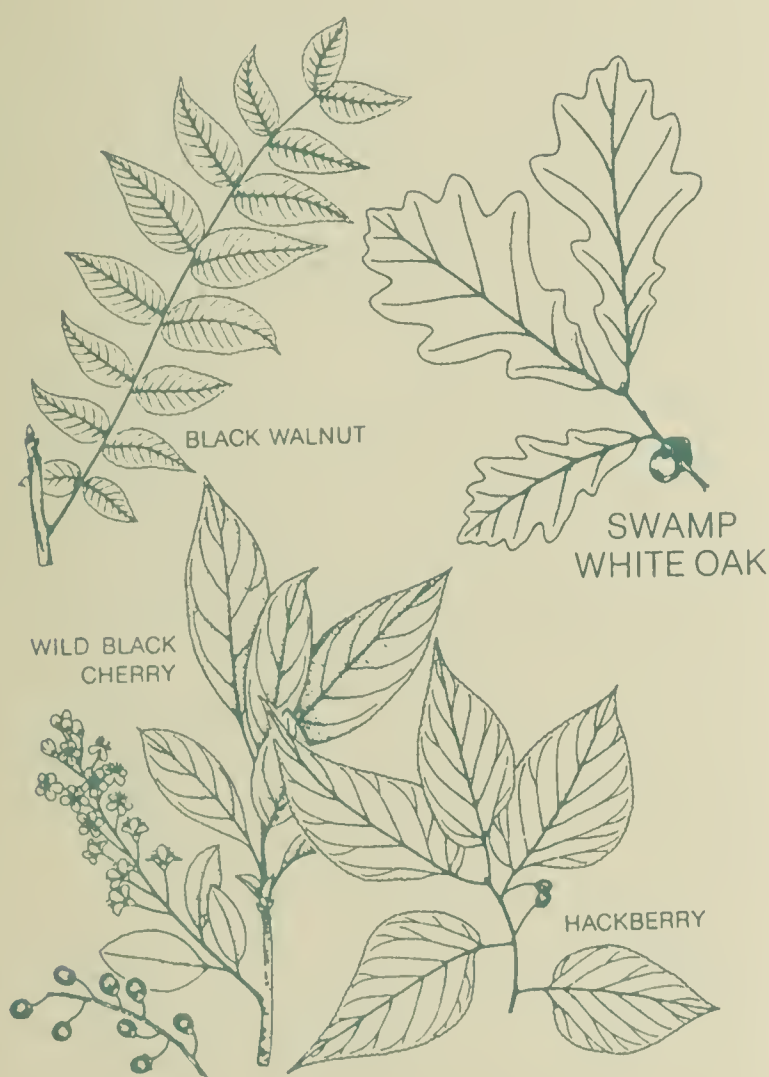
cabinet making, veneers, interior finishing and fine furniture.

Post 20: FERN VALLEY — This valley receives little direct sunlight. It is very moist and supports the large amount of moss and Christmas ferns.

Post 21: BLACK OAK (*Quercus velutina*) — The Black Oak is a large member of the oak family, reaching over 80 feet tall. The wood is heavy and strong and is used primarily for general or rough construction. The extract from the powdered inner bark, called Quercitron, is used in the making of buff, gold, and orange dyes.

Post 22: FENCE DAMAGED OAK — This oak has been needlessly damaged by using it as a corner post in this fence line. The oak has grown around the wire and now that portion of the trunk is worthless as timber.

Post 23: RICHLAND CREEK OVERLOOK — The creek flowing below is Richland Creek. It originates about 3 miles north of the town of Strasburg, flows through the entire length of the forest and empties into the Kaskaskia River, one mile southeast of Cowden. The entire creek is approximately ten miles in length. Of the ten miles, only four are in the State



Forest boundaries. During the spring, the creek regularly floods out of it's banks onto the parking lot. Fish species found in this creek include: Johnny darter, creek chub, bluntnose minnow, fathead minnow, silvery minnow, silverjaw minnow, striped shiner, Bigmouth shiner, red shiner, sand shiner, golden shiner, redfin shiner, and stoneroller.

Post 24: PAW PAW GROVE (*Asimina triloba*) — This small tree has very large leaves and grows in deep, rich, moist soil. It produces purple flowers in the spring and a large, edible fruit in the late summer and early fall. The fruit is very popular with wildlife, and early settlers used it for food and to make a yellow dye. The wood is not used commercially.

Post 25: COTTONWOOD (*Populus deltoides*) — This tree is characteristic of floodplain areas. The large cavity was most likely caused by lightning striking the tree. This makes a good den for squirrels, raccoons, and birds. Cottonwood trees can grow as tall as 120 feet in thirty years. The wood produced is soft, weak, and tends to warp easily. It is mainly used for crates, pallets and other packing material.

Post 26: HACKBERRY (*Celtis occidentalis*) — This is a medium to large tree, sometimes attaining a height of 80 feet. It's natural habitat is the bottomland forest community that is seen growing here. It is not a particularly valuable timber tree, although it is used to some extent for furniture making.

Post 27: SILVER MAPLE (*Acer saccharinum*) — This is a common tree in the floodplain forests and along city streets. It survives well in poorly drained soils. The tree grows rapidly for the first thirty years. The wood is brittle and is used in inexpensive furniture and crates.

Post 28: Notice the exposed tree roots which are a result of the creek overflowing periodically. The soft soil, with a high sand content, erodes easily.

Post 29: Stand quietly and concentrate on the sounds and smells of the forest. What do you hear? What do you smell?

Post 30: A prairie has been established on the hill north of the parking lot. One of the springs is also available to visit there.